



**TV/Series**

**13 | 2018**

***Diziler* : les séries télévisées turques**

---

## “Turkish Content”: The Historical Rise of the *Dizi* Genre

Arzu Öztürkmen

---



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/tvseries/2406>

DOI: 10.4000/tvseries.2406

ISSN: 2266-0909

### Publisher

GRIC - Groupe de recherche Identités et Cultures

### Electronic reference

Arzu Öztürkmen, « “Turkish Content”: The Historical Rise of the *Dizi* Genre », *TV/Series* [Online], 13 | 2018, Online since 03 July 2018, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/tvseries/2406> ; DOI : 10.4000/tvseries.2406

---

This text was automatically generated on 19 April 2019.



*TV/Series* est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

---

# "Turkish Content": The Historical Rise of the *Dizi* Genre

Arzu Öztürkmen

---

- 1 Since 2011, I have been engaged in the ethnography of the *dizi* world, a booming industry in both domestic and foreign markets. As a folklore and performance studies scholar, my focus is on the emergence of genres and on how their contemporary artistic creativity is rooted in the traditional contexts in which they are produced. As part of the first generation of television viewers in Turkey, and growing up with TRT<sup>1</sup>, my own personal memory of television serials, foreign and Turkish alike, also guided me in structuring my research. In its contemporary version, *dizis* have come to offer a hybridity of different narrative forms including musical, spatial, cinematographic and visual as well as textual. This essay has therefore a historical-ethnographic approach to the *dizi* world, examining how the *dizis* we have been watching since the mid-1990s grew to become a different cultural genre from those we were watching in the 1970s and 80s.
- 2 My field research began in 2011 with visits on the sets and preliminary interviews with writers, directors, editors, musicians and location scouts, to better understand the artistic construction of the ethnographical context of the *dizi*. *Dizis* had been formerly analyzed by scholars in the field of sociology and media studies, who usually approached them as textual narratives, analyzed with an eye on gender, class or semiological representations. At the beginning of the research, I was interested in other narrative components, particularly in musical narratives as a new element of the overall construction of the *dizi*, but also the editing process which had an important influence on how the episode story would reach the audiences. Much later, I also had a chance to interview actors, producers and set workers in different contexts. Their accounts over the past years have helped me to better examine the intertextuality between these different narrative forms in constructing the contemporary *dizi* as a genre.
- 3 Obviously, the genre issue is much more complex. When one explores the literature on the emergence and development of other television serials around the world, like the "soap opera", "primetime TV drama", "telenovela" or "*musalsal*",<sup>2</sup> they all point: (1) to a particular historical-political context which made these genres appear; (2) to a traditional

artistic domain which precedes them (popular theatrical forms, radio shows, etc.). The soap, for instance, has been politically situated in an escapist mood within the developing economies of post depression America in the 1950s, while the telenovela boomed during the authoritarian military coup era during the 1970s and the 80s<sup>3</sup>. Both genres had initially started on the radio, the soap operas had literally been sponsored by the soap industry, since the 1930s, and the radio telenovelas since the 1950s. The soap narrative had been formulated by advertising executives, while the telenovela genre has been linked to traditional circus theater combined with the populism of the Brazilian theater.

- 4 The development of the Turkish *dizi* world has been historically tied to the international repertoire of television drama. International television series were the pioneering tele-narratives Turkish audiences encountered, determining their modes of "television watching". They also established the desire for particular kinds of *dizi* production. One can easily state that the *dizi* has evolved in time since the mid 1990s to become a semi-structural form as of the 2000s. My research question starts therefore with a search for understanding the historical context in which the *dizi* established itself as the genre we know of and discuss today.

## On the History of "Turkish Content" and its Agencies

- 5 Television entered Turkish social life during the 1970s, through TRT which was established in 1969. Broadcasting was limited to three days a week and black and white only until 1984. To situate the *dizi* within its own historical-ethnographic context, it is important to understand how Turkish audiences developed a sense of "appealing content" through time. It is therefore useful to begin by looking at the traditional habits of Turkish audiences and their sense of entertainment.
- 6 Before television or even radio broadcasting, Turkish traditional entertainment historically combined food, music and dance together. The traditional *Ortaoyunu* and *Karagöz* shadow theater since the Ottoman times have followed an interactive and improvised humor based performance (very much like the *Commedia dell'arte*) centering on class conflicts, ethnic humor, gender quarrels and based in neighborhood settings.
- 7 These were performed in open air, in coffeehouses or domestic space where audiences could shout, interfere and make comments, while enjoying food and drink. It is during the Republican times that the Turkish public was trained in "indoor theater" by learning how to wait in line to buy tickets, not to eat nuts while watching, to keep silent during the performance and to wait for the end of a show to applaud. One can easily state that traditional theater had a sense of what we call the sitcom genre today<sup>4</sup>. A survey of the texts of *Karagöz* and *Ortaoyunu* will clearly reveal how traditional theater used situational comedy through punning, misunderstandings or absurd encounters<sup>5</sup>.
- 8 Storytelling in epic and romance forms was organized again in domestic and public spheres, which could include music, dramatic mimicry and gestures. There the content would be based more on Middle Eastern stories, be they heroic, religious or romantic. These stories would in fact circulate through illustrated printed booklets through the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. Later, during the nation-building period in Republican times, radio broadcasting became the major media. News and music programs were the popular forms; particularly radio theater serials emerged as an important genre in the 1950s, captivating audiences consisting mostly of housewives and students. The content of radio

theater included western classics, adaptations from international bestsellers (like Mario Simmel's novels in the 1970s) and original Turkish plays.

- 9 When television broadcasting began to spread in Turkey during the 1970s, the number of television sets was very limited, as they were all imported. The first generation of television viewers in Turkey had to rely mainly on German brands like Chaub Lorenz, Grundig, Nortmende, Blaupunkt, Telefunken until the early 1990s, where Turkey became a leading "oem", original equipment manufacturer<sup>6</sup>. While television sets were precious home appliances, they were also a source of socialization, creating a semi-public sphere within the domestic space, as many people needed to share television through house visits. Uniting neighbors and enhancing family reunions, watching television brought back the old habits of watching "aloud" and "with food".

## Discovering Colorful Lives in Black and White: TRT Broadcasting during the 1970s and 1980s

- 10 During the 1970s, the main formats of Turkish television consisted of news, music shows, and movies, mostly Hollywood black and white cinema. Stars of the 1950s and the 60s like Tyrone Power, Kim Novak, Ava Gardner, Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Burt Lancaster became familiar faces for young Turkish audiences in the 1970s and the 80s. American prime time series *The Persuaders* starring Tony Curtis and Roger Moore, *Star Trek*, *Mission Impossible*, *Petrocelli*, *Little House on the Prairie* and *Bonanza* were broadcast in the early 1970s on TRT. But the "serial effect" was mostly created by shows like *Dallas* and *The Fugitive*. Along with Dr. Kimble, charismatic *Colombo* and *Mc Millan and Wife* also accompanied this trend. During the 1970s, TRT also showed BBC dramas adapted from classical novels like *Anna Karenina* and some French productions like *Allô Police*, *Arsène Lupin* and *Jacques*. TRT imported many unscripted formats from abroad as well. The first generation of Turkish television viewers were thus exposed to European formats, becoming fans of RAI studio shows, which starred phenomenal Italian singers like Raffaella Carra, Mina and Adriano Celentano. One other important format showing contests among different German villages had become the highlight of Sunday daytime broadcasting.
- 11 While showing foreign content, TRT was also interested in producing Turkish television films and mini-series. As the official national broadcasting network, their understanding of "Turkish production" consisted of adapting Turkish novels for television. In the early 1970s, TRT commissioned prominent movie directors like Halit Refiğ, Lütü Akad and Metin Erksan to film a series of short stories. Although these stories were well-known stories of modern Turkish literature, they were not written for television. Exposed to fascinating foreign content, the majority of the Turkish audience found these pioneering television films depressing. They had a hard time interpreting the cinematographic symbolism of the movie directors who adapted these stories. Watching Turkish television content became in a way a "national duty" rather than a pleasant event, giving a sense of failure, when compared to western productions. What was captivating in Turkish content those days indeed came from the sitcom *Kaynanalar* ([*The In-Laws*], TRT, 1974-1997, 950 episodes) and the adaptation of the novel *Aşk-ı Memnu* ([*Forbidden Love*], TRT, 1975) by Halit Refiğ. In contrast to Erksan and Akad's story adaptations, *Aşk-ı Memnu* became a real

success as a mini-series<sup>7</sup>. These two productions were very influential in giving the first feeling of producing high quality shows, of "western calibre".

- 12 TRT's early attempts to adapt stories and novels from Turkish literature gave way to another idea in the 1980s. TRT decided to commission acclaimed poet and novelist Atilla İlhan to write original scripts. İlhan wrote two *dizis* for TRT, *Kartallar Yüksek Uçar* ([*Eagles Fly High*], 1983, 14 episodes) and *Yarın Artık Bugündür* ([*Tomorrow Now Means Today*], TRT 1, 1987). *Kartallar Yüksek Uçar* was set in Izmir on the Aegean coast. It focused on competing families, generational clashes and romance, contextualized in the social-political landscape of Republican Turkish history. *Yarın Artık Bugündür* portrayed the rising awareness of a bourgeois girl, when she was exposed to the problems of eastern Turkey, leading to her estrangement from her former social circles. The focus of the content those years was therefore more of a "historiographic" nature. The essential desire was the analysis of Turkish society and history with a critical eye. And with his Marxist background and loyalty to traditional culture, Atilla İlhan was the perfect choice as an intellectual writer with a foot in Turkish cinema<sup>8</sup>.
- 13 The 1980s were also the years when TRT developed an interest in historical drama ranging from adaptation of historical novels to historical plays based on political figures and events. Novel adaptations usually depicted the late Ottoman social life and political events in the 19th century period. Following the success of *Aşk-ı Memnu* (1975), three similar series aired in the 1980s. *Üç İstanbul* ([*3 Istanbul*], TRT 1, 1983), *Bugünün Saraylısı* ([*Today's Aristocrat*], TRT 1, 1985) and *Çalıkuşu* ([*The Wren*], TRT 1, 1986) were mini-series whose narrative evolved around class and romance set in the context of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman social and political life. Loyal to the original novels, they were effective domestic productions, which appealed to Turkish audiences through the 1980s.
- 14 Produced by a state-run national network, historical dramas reflected very much the official approach to Ottoman history, depicting the "foundation" period or the lives of powerful sultans. This genre began with the phenomenal *4. Murat* ([*Murat the 4<sup>th</sup>*], TRT 1, 1981), focusing on the lives of two powerful figures, the Sultan and his mother Kösem. Performed by prominent theater actors and actresses, this series adopted a strong theatrical frame. It continued with *Kuruluş* ([*Foundation*], TRT 1, 1988), this time a high-budget grand production depicting the foundation years of the Ottoman Empire, and filmed upon a plateau particularly built for that production.
- 15 The 1980s were the years where first soap operas and telenovelas also began being broadcasted on TRT. Following *Köle Isaura* ([*Esclava Isaura*], TRT 1, 1985), others came along like *Santa Barbara* (TRT 1, 1986), *Cesur ve Güzel* ([*The Bold and the Beautiful*], TRT 1, 1988), *Zenginler de Ağlar* ([*Los Ricos También Lloran*], TRT 1, 1989) and *Hayat Ağacı* ([*Generations*], TRT 1, 1989). For Turkish television viewers the content of soap operas and telenovelas matched very well the memory of Turkish cinema of the 1960s, which consisted heavily of melodrama. This was indeed the reason why TRT had also invested in family and neighborhood drama in the 1980s. The first sitcom *Kaynanalar* [*The In-Laws*], which had begun airing in 1974 was a great success and proved that Turkish familial humor, but also melodrama, could compete with imported drama. Hence came *Perihan Abı* ([*Sister Perihan*], TRT 1, 1986), *Yaprak Dökümü* ([*The Fallen Leaves*], TRT 1, 1987)<sup>9</sup> and *Bizimkiler* ([*Ours*], TRT 1, 1988). *Perihan Abı*, in particular, which was set in Kuzguncuk, a neighborhood along the Bosphorus, was the harbinger of the many other neighborhood based *dizi* genres of the following years.

## From Monopoly to Competition: The Shift from TRT to Private Network Broadcasting

- 16 As private television networks also began their national broadcasting, the Turkish content produced by TRT shifted towards a more diversified repertoire from 1990s onwards. These were the years where the national monopoly of TRT was broken, and new scripted and unscripted formats or imported foreign productions began airing on private channels. This was the beginning of a new era where productions were no longer subsidized but instead expected to be primarily "profitable". A fierce competition began among private networks to transfer TRT's hit soap operas and telenovelas, and import new ones like *Yalan Rüzgarı* ([*The Young and the Restless*], TRT 1, 1990), *Marimar* (ATV, 1994) or *Fırtınalı Günler* ([*Days of Our Lives*], Kanal D, 1995)<sup>10</sup>.
- 17 As for Turkish content, these shows took over the genre of family and neighborhood dramas. Some were also transferred from TRT like the phenomenal *Ferhunde Hanımlar* ([*Ladies Around Ferhunde*], TRT 1, 1993-1999) while new ones were being launched rapidly like *Mahallenin Muhtarları* ([*Headmen of the Neighborhood*], Kanal D, 1992)<sup>11</sup> or *Süper Baba* ([*Super Daddy*], ATV, 1993).
- 18 The 1990s were also marked by the rise of another subgenre, the melodrama featuring national popular singers. These were the years when the popular music industry boomed with the rise of private radio broadcasting along with special music channels on television. These channels featured video clips, but casting a singer in a drama offered a more rewarding opportunity for drama producers. A series of melodramas emerged in the 1990s, featuring singers like Emrah in *Gündüzün Karanlığı* ([*The Darkness of the Day*], Show TV, 1993), Mahsun Kırmızıgül in *Alem Buysa* ([*If Universe is as Such*], Star TV, 1993), İbrahim Tatlıses in *Fırat* (Star TV, 1997), Alişan in *Aynalı Tahir* ([*Tahir the Mirror*], Star TV, 1998) or Seda Sayan in *Evimiz Olacak mı?* ([*Will We Have a Home?*], TGRT, 1999). These series served their producers and the private networks very well, displaying singers for a longer time than a video clip, and benefiting from their fans. This trend continued until the economic crisis hit the industry, which could not afford the high prices for the stars.
- 19 TRT took the challenge of competition during the 1990s by making choices on where to focus. Strict regulations falling upon them as a state network brought a certain limit to their genre and format choices. During these years, TRT focused on series depicting the family milieu, both as drama and comedy. They also produced documentaries and historical drama, taking the lead in domains where private networks could not yet invest or give priority. Depicting the Turkish Independence War, *Kurtuluş* ([*The Saving*], TRT 1, 1994) was for instance a project, which could only be produced through state sponsorship. The series was filmed over two years as a grand production like *Kuruluş* ([*The Foundation*], 1988). TRT could also produce its own documentaries, whereas private networks used mostly imported ones. These were the years where private networks were testing their strength in this new television landscape, which was indeed an industry-in-progress. Many of them hired producers from TRT, but TRT still had more power to cover more areas in the national territory and to access the relevant range of actors both from the cinema and theater worlds. Moreover compared to private production companies, TRT still offered a secure venue and more possibility to be widely broadcast. This balance changed over the years, when particularly the industry created its own "cast" both

behind and in front of the camera, and gathered the capital to invest in high-quality productions, breaking TRT's monopoly in this domain.

## Industry-in-Progress: Towards a Balance Between State and Private Television

- 20 In the aftermath of a decade-long establishment of private broadcasting, the television industry moved in new directions during the 2000s. Trying to find a new balance between state and private television, a new epoch began where TRT lost its monopoly position and the rise in broadcasting time created more need for scripted and unscripted formats. Many networks tried to fill this time with foreign drama and shows, but imported substitution was not so easy when not subsidized. Although imported soaps and telenovelas like *Bütün Çocuklarım* ([*All My Children*], Kanal D, 2000) and *Maria Mercedes* (TRT 1, ATV, 2001) continued being broadcast, new and old local drama also aired on state and private channels. These years were an era of searching for new creative content, which would circulate from one network to another, once successful. The family comedy *Çocuklar Duymasın* ([*Don't Let the Kids Know*], 2002 - nowadays) had attained such an exceptionally high rating that it became the topic of hour-long discussions in the most popular debate program *Siyaset Meydanı* ([*Political Arena*], 1994 - nowadays). The search for new content also expanded towards the depiction of issues like migration or ethnicity, in the socio-political context of Turkey struggling with identity politics. Seeking to captivate more audiences, historical focus emerged as a new domain of creative content for private broadcasters. Critical revision of recent history came forward with the phenomenal *Çemberimde Gül Oya* ([*Rose Lace In My Scarf*], Kanal D, 2004-2005), *Hatırla Sevgili* ([*Remember Darling*], ATV, 2006-2008) and *Elveda Rumeli* ([*Farewell Roumelia*], ATV, 2007-2009), all of them being series which focused on factual historical data represented through the gaze of different family lives.
- 21 While neighborhood series continued to air, melodrama depicting love between the rich and the poor became a dominant genre of the 2000s. *Bir İstanbul Masalı* ([*An Istanbul Tale*], ATV, 2003-2005), *Haziran Gecesi* ([*The June Night*], Kanal D, 2004-2006), *Gümüş* ([*Nour / Money*], Kanal D, 2005-2007), *İhlamlar Altında* ([*Under the Linden Trees*], Kanal D, 2005-2006) and *1001 Gece* ([*1001 Nights*], Kanal D, 2006-2009) can be cited among the most important of these romance series, where class and gender issues were dealt with. One other important subgenre was the so-called *töre dizileri* (tribal series). These series centered on social life in the southeast of Turkey, where traditional norms abound. Following the phenomenal success of *Asmalı Konak* ([*Vine Mansion*], ATV, 2002-2003), others came along like *Zerda* (ATV, 2002-2004), *Sıla* (ATV, 2006-2008), *Asi* (Kanal D, 2003, 2007-2009), and *Bir Bulut Olsam* ([*If I Were a Cloud*], Kanal D, 2009) on different private networks. Their stories revolved around the household of a powerful landowner, love triangles and family solidarity. Another important subgenre, which was launched during this era was the political action genre focusing on intelligence services and conspiracy issues in the Middle East region. In the post-Gulf-war context, *Kurtlar Vadisi* ([*Valley of Wolves*], Show TV and Kanal D, 2003-2007) very rapidly drew a regional audience. Given all this diversity, one can easily state that the 2000s were in fact the constructive years of the *dizi* genre as we speak of today.



## The Establishment of *Dizi* as a Genre

- 22 Today on international television markets like the MIPCOM, NATPE or DISCOP, the buyers usually refer to the Turkish *dizi* genre as Turkish soap, Turkish drama or Turkish telenovelas. This terminology may or may not change in time, but the genre of *dizi* stands apart from the soap or telenovela in different ways.
- 23 As we mentioned before, when one explores television serials around the world, be they soap opera, primetime drama, telenovela or *musalsal*, they are all rooted in a historical-political context and in a traditional, artistic domain, which precedes them. Historically speaking, the development of the Turkish *dizi* world has been tied to the international repertoire of television drama. International television series have had a great impact on Turkish audiences, determining their modes of television watching, establishing their perception of high quality content and creating the *imaginaire* towards the construction of the *dizi* genre.
- 24 One can easily state that the *dizi* evolved in time from the mid 1990s into a semi-structural form in the 2000s. As a genre, it has different features from the soap and telenovela. Many writers and directors believe that the style of telling the story makes a difference. Because *dizis* are shot in natural settings<sup>12</sup> and because dialogues are performed almost in real time, *dizis* are "naturally slow". The musical, textual and visual diversity is richer than the soap and the telenovela, which also have a slow narrative flow. Structurally speaking, *dizis* offer easily comprehensible narratives in their naturally communicated slowness in a wide variety of settings. The large range of locations raises curiosity as each place becomes a puzzle for the local audience, and for the foreign viewers, an eye on places where they do not have the opportunity to travel.
- 25 *Dizis* also offer an intertextuality between different narrative forms such as musical, visual and textual. The pace of the production process is unique to the Turkish television industry. Many networks are reluctant to commit themselves to a full-season broadcast without seeing the success of a show, thus the advertising revenues. This is why production begins with a few episodes in stock and scripts continue to be written on a weekly basis. Through the course of broadcasting, screen writers are exposed to a very rapid response from the audience, actors and producers, a process which has a direct impact on their writing. This is an almost face-to-face interaction where producers, writers, directors, art directors, directors of photography, editors, musicians, actors, agents and location scouts all have a creative input on the final product. It is therefore very important to explore the mechanisms of collective production, and to look at how the social actors of the *dizi* world influence and collaborate with one another through this creative process. Yet, this also makes the lifetime of the *dizis* very vulnerable, as no *dizi* can last as long as a soap opera.
- 26 One must also remember that there is a very interactive relationship between the press, fan sites, producers and writers. Gossiping is an extended oral genre, as much as fan site creative writing and clip production. Fans produce nowadays their alternative scripts, and share opinions once the casting process begins to match their star with their other most preferred stars.
- 27 From the perspective of audience perception, local attachments may have different reasons from those appealing to foreign audiences. *Dizis* rely heavily on Turkish *lieux de*



*mémoire* and display a familiar ethnographic imagery, pouring scenes from Turkish ordinary life, which include family meals, true to life costumes and dialogues with traditional sayings<sup>13</sup>. Although *dizis* may be sold all over the world today, they are primarily produced for the local audiences.

## Recent Trends: The Road to Global Acknowledgement

- 28 Turkish broadcasters and distributors have been following global television markets since the 1970s, primarily to buy new content and formats for national broadcasting. TRT has been part of the EBU, European Broadcasting Union, since its foundation in 1950. Although acquisition had been the primary reason for attending these global markets, Turkish productions like *Aşk-ı Memnu* and *Çalıkuşu* were sold abroad in the 1980s<sup>14</sup>. The breakthrough however came in 2008 with *Gümüş* ([*Nour/Money*], the first *dizi* which boomed abroad. *Gümüş* was not the first series sold internationally, but it was the first to captivate a mass foreign audience at a size not experienced before<sup>15</sup>. The enthusiasm first began in the Middle East, moving west later towards the Balkans and the eastern European countries. The trend continued with the opening of the Latin American market in 2014 and leading towards Asian territories nowadays.
- 29 There are many different views regarding the boom of interest in Turkish *dizi* around the world. Some of these features, like the use of real locations and naturally slow narration, have been mentioned earlier in comparison to other genres. The technical quality of the productions and a rich profile of well performing actors should also be remembered. New faces with familiar Mediterranean looks were welcome in those territories where *dizis* were launched. Özlem Özsümbül, who directed the sales of Kanal D in the last decade, calls attention to the universal thematic commonalities as well: "Viewers from different regions find common ground in universal themes – love, desire, ambition and revenge<sup>16</sup>." One can perhaps state that the strength of the *dizis* lies in their merger of these universal themes with a culturally familiar contextualization in these regions.
- 30 Here the impact of familiarity with the "Turkish cultural domain" should also be underlined. Turkey, as a "Nation of Empire<sup>17</sup>," shares with the MENA and eastern European regions a similar aesthetic memory and social codes rooted in the Ottoman Empire. The LATAM and Asian countries also have cultural affinities with the Turkish world in different ways. Given their Mediterranean heritage, Latin American countries enjoy the family scenes with similar food or behavioral patterns. To Asian viewers, the Turkish cultural domain also offers a similar value system in terms of gender and class, but also a similar stance vis-a-vis the western world and modernization experiences. One should also note that the boom of Turkish sales on the Latin American markets began with old content (series such as *1001 Gece* (Kanal D, 2006-2009), *Ezel* (ATV, 2009-2010), *Fatmagül* (Kanal D, 2010-2012). But at the same time, these *dizis* opened a gate for the new ones, featuring the same lead actors, who became international stars of social media, if not the mainstream magazine press.
- 31 Since the mid 1990s, Turkey's journey with rising Islamism began to affect broadcasting trends. This turned out to be more visible in the aftermath of the 2011 elections, where political critique in the Turkish media became an increasingly constrained and state-controlled issue. With growing authoritarianism, mainstream networks changed hands from liberal owners to more pro-government ones (Star in 2011, ATV 2013), obstructing a

tradition of political debates and political humor on Turkish television. Political round table or discussion programs like *Siyaset Meydanı* [Political Arena], *Teke Tek* [One By One] or *Ceviz Kabuğu* [Nutshell] glued audiences to the screens during the 2000s, offering platforms for free discussion, a trend which has radically changed since then. Although some political programs continue to air, they are no longer a primetime event.

- 32 This phenomenon caused a visible shift in primetime broadcasting, away from news media and towards the *dizi*. Although political content made its way into *dizi* productions in the 2000s, rising authoritarianism, and industry dependence on ratings and advertising revenues, limited networks to romance and thriller genres<sup>18</sup>. *Dizi* writers often complain today of auto-censorship, particularly under the pressure of the censor, *Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK)*, which can easily penalize networks airing nonconformist material regarding government policies. In the last few years, Turkish producers have also been going through a challenging transition, as new international players like O3 and Endemol have entered the Turkish market.
- 33 Meanwhile the exportation of the *dizis* continues boosting other aspects of the Turkish economy. *Dizis* have sparked a tourism boom in two different ways. Firstly, by displaying Turkey's different places and regions, *dizis* have raised a general interest in Istanbul, the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts, Cappadocia, and the ancient eastern cities like Antioch or Mardin. Second, they have shifted the tourist routes, from historical mosques and palaces towards the scenic locations like a particular neighborhood, mansion or restaurant showed in the *dizis*.
- 34 With its dynamic, young and hybrid demography, Turkey is a complex country with rising economic growth. Although benefiting from TRT's legacy, the television industry today owes its leap mostly to the private sector. In the last few years, in the midst of radical political change, the industry has gone through many challenges and adaptations. As the country of honor at the MIPCOM 2015, Turkey's television industry proved that it had developed its own agencies to produce new creative content. Coming a long way since the 1970s, the *dizi* genre, which was once inspired by foreign drama, has now established its own global impact, reaching out to distant territories and audiences.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AYDIN, Kemal Aydın & Tuncay GÜLOĞLU (2012), "Book Reading and Social Status in Turkey", *Economics and Management*, 17 (2), p. 618-623.
- FORD, Sam, Abigail de Kosnik and C. Lee Harrington (eds) (2011), *The survival of soap opera: transformations for a new media era*, Jackson, Miss., University Press of Mississippi,
- KUDRET, Cevdet (1994), *Ortaoyunu*, İstanbul, İnkılâp Kitabevi.
- KUDRET, Cevdet (1992), *Karagöz*, Ankara, Bilgi Yayınevi.
- MATELSKI, Marilyn J. (2012), *The soap opera evolution: America's enduring romance with daytime dram*, Jefferson, NC. McFarland.



- ## ABSTRACTS

Cet article se penche sur la fabrique du *dizi* (série turque) comme genre. Le genre du *dizi*, dont l'élaboration remonte aux années 1970, a été inspiré par les fictions étrangères ; il a maintenant un impact mondial et touche des territoires et des audiences lointains. Comme genre, le *dizi* est

différent du soap ou du *telenovela*. Comme les *dizis* sont tournées en extérieur et que le rythme des dialogues se déroulent naturellement, les *dizis* sont lentes. La diversité musicale, textuelle et visuelle est plus riche que le soap et le *telenovela*, qui ont aussi un rythme narratif lent.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** dizi, séries turques, TRT, industrie audiovisuelle, attentes des téléspectateurs, töre dizileri

**Keywords:** dizi, Turkish TV series, TRT, audiovisual industry, viewer expectations, töre dizileri, content

## AUTHOR

### ARZU ÖZTÜRKMEN

Dr. Arzu Öztürkmen is a Professor in the History Department of Boğaziçi University. She received her doctoral degree at the Department of Folklore and Folk life at the University of Pennsylvania in 1993 and has been teaching at Boğaziçi University since 1994. She specializes in performance studies (national celebrations, dance history, verbal art as performance, television drama), oral history and history of emotions (memory of conflict), folklore studies. She has published several books including *Celebration, Entertainment and Theater in the Ottoman World* (Seagull Publications, 2014) with Prof. Dr. Suraiya Faroqhi and *Müzik, Dans, Gösterim: Tarihsel ve Kuramsal Tartışmalar* (Boğaziçi University Publications, 2013).

Arzu Öztürkmen est professeure au département d'histoire de l'université du Bosphore (Boğaziçi universitesi). Elle a obtenu son doctorat au département de folklore de l'université de Pennsylvanie en 1993. Elle enseigne depuis 1994 à l'université du Bosphore. Ses intérêts de recherche comprennent l'histoire des arts vivants, l'histoire orale, et les études de folklore. Elle a publié plusieurs livres, *Celebration, Entertainment and Theater in the Ottoman World* (Seagull Publications, 2014) avec Suraiya Faroqhi et *Müzik, Dans, Gösterim: Tarihsel ve Kuramsal Tartışmalar* [Musique, danse, et représentation : débats historiques et institutionnels (Publications de l'université du Bosphore, 2013)].